

Serial No.: 09/879,220
Attorney Docket No.: BL055-GN003-CIP
Amendment & RCE

REMARKS

Claims 1-58 and 60-90 are currently pending in the Application. Claim 59 was previously canceled. Claims 1-5, 10, 26-29, 32, 33, 39, 41, 43, 44, 51-56, 61, 64-67, 70, 72, 78, 80, 82, and 90 have been amended. All other claims remain in their original or previously-amended form. Reconsideration of the Application is respectfully requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

The Office action states that claims 5-8, 10-12, 56-59, 61-63, and 70 contain allowable subject matter but are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 5, 10, 56, 61, and 70 have been rewritten in independent form, incorporating the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, these claims are now in condition for allowance. Claims 6-8, 11-12, 57-59, and 62-63 depend from claims 5, 10, 56, and 61, respectively, and are therefore allowable for the same reasons. Applicant respectfully requests that the objections of record be withdrawn.

The Applicant also notes that the Office Action Summary page lists claim 32 as being rejected, but the Office action contains no rejection directed to claim 32. Claim 32 has been amended in the same fashion as other claims herein to provide that the migration score is a numerical score that is computed from buzz levels expressed on a numerical scale, as discussed below. For the same reasons stated below, Applicant submits that claim 32 is in condition for allowance.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-4, 9, 13-15, 26-31, 33, 35-38, 52-55, 60, 64-69, and 71-75 stand rejected as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,571,234 to Knight et al. Applicant has amended these claims, as discussed below, to place them in condition for allowance.

A. Claims 1-4, 9, and 13-15

Claim 1 has been amended to provide expressly that the present invention requires the step of "computing a numerical relevance score" for a message, where "the numerical relevance score rates the relevance of the collected message to at least one topic on a

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numerical scale. Support for this feature can be found in the specification in paragraph 89, which describes the numerical scale used for the relevance scores. By requiring each message to be assigned a computed numerical score that ranks its relevance to a topic on a numerical scale, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple logical associations and tagging described in Knight. Accordingly, claim 1 is now in condition for allowance.

Claims 2-4, 9, and 13-15 all depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above with respect to claim 1. Claim 2 has been similarly amended to provide expressly that "the buzz score is a function of numerical relevance scores for each message in the set of messages," and claim 3 has been amended to provide expressly that the buzz score is a function of numerical influence scores for the posting pseudonyms, and "the influence score rates the influence of the posting pseudonym on a numerical scale." These amendments, like the amendment to claim 1, further distinguish the claims from the Knight reference because these features are completely absent from Knight.

Additionally, claim 4 has been amended to provide expressly that "Rel is a computed numerical relevance score for a message, F is a computed numerical influence score for a poster of a message." By requiring the buzz score to be calculated from a computed numerical score for each message and a computer numerical influence score for the poster of the message, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple Boolean logical operations described in Knight. Accordingly, claim 4 is now in condition for allowance.

Further regarding claims 13-15, all of these claims require the step of computing an "opinion rating" for a message. In the method of claim 15, textual analysis software application compares a content of the collected message with a plurality of known words and phrases indicative of expressions of an opinion. There is no reference at all in Knight to analysis of *opinions* expressed in messages. The Knight method classifies messages into groups based on subject matter (col.22, ln.7-43), but it does not classify or in any way analyze *opinions* expressed in messages. Because this essential feature of claims 13-15 is completely absent from the Knight reference, Knight does not anticipate these claims.

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B. Claims 26-31, 33, 35-38, 52-55, 60, 64-69, and 71-75

Independent claims 26, 33, 52, 64, and 72 have been amended to provide expressly that the relevance score is a numerical relevance score, and the numerical relevance score rates the relevance of the collected message to at least one topic on a numerical scale. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, by requiring each message to be assigned a computed numerical score that ranks its relevance to a topic on a numerical scale, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple logical associations and tagging described in Knight. Accordingly, these claims are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 27-31, 35-38, 53-55 and 60, 65-69 and 71, and 73-75 depend from independent claims 26, 33, 52, 64, and 72, respectively, and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above. Additionally, claims 27-29, 53-55, and 65-67 have been amended to provide expressly that the migration scores and buzz scores are numerical scores calculated on a numerical scale and therefore clearly go beyond the simple Boolean logical operations described in Knight.

Further regarding claim 71, this claim requires the step of computing an "opinion rating" for a message. As discussed above with respect to claims 13-15, there is no reference at all in Knight to analysis of *opinions* expressed in messages. The Knight method classifies messages into groups based on subject matter (col.22, ln.7-43), but it does not classify or in any way analyze *opinions* expressed in messages. Because this essential feature of claim 71 is completely absent from the Knight reference, Knight does not anticipate this claim.

III. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 34 stands rejected as allegedly being obvious from Knight; and claims 16-25, 39-51, and 76-90 stand rejected as allegedly being obvious from Knight in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,314,420 to Lang et al. Applicant has amended these claims, as discussed herein, to place them in condition for allowance.

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A. Claim 34

Claim 34 depends from independent claim 33 and therefore includes all the elements and limitations of claim 33. As discussed above, claim 33 has been amended to provide that the relevance score is a numerical score and "the numerical relevance score rates the relevance of the collected message to at least one topic on a numerical scale." As discussed above with respect to claim 1, by requiring each message to be assigned a computed numerical score that ranks its relevance to a topic on a numerical scale, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple logical associations and tagging described in Knight. This feature of claim 34 is completely absent from the Knight reference. Accordingly, claim 34 is not obvious from Knight.

B. Claims 16-25

These claims all depend from independent claim 1 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 1. As discussed above, claim 1 (and therefore each of claims 16-25) has been amended to require the step of "computing a numerical relevance score" for a message, where "the numerical relevance score rates the relevance of the collected message to at least one topic on a numerical scale." This step is not taught by Knight. Additionally, each of claims 16-25 includes the step of *computing an opinion rating* (from claim 13, from which claims 13-25 depend). As discussed above, there is no reference at all in Knight to analysis of *opinions* expressed in messages.

The Office action cites Lang for the teaching of ratings as applied to electronic messages, which is absent from the Knight reference. This reliance, however, is misplaced because the ratings of search results in Lang are supplied *manually by users*.

The Lang reference is a Lycos patent relating to a search technique known as adaptive search. A search engine employing this technique will use user-supplied feedback (whereby the users rate the quality of search results) to learn and adapt in order to select better search results in future searches. Thus, the Lang adaptive search method uses *manual ratings of messages by users* to improve the quality of subsequent searches. The rating of message quality is done entirely by users, and the search engine then uses these user-supplied quality ratings to adapt its search technique. By contrast, in the method of claims 16-25 of the present application, the ratings of messages are *computed*

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by the system upon analysis of each electronic message. The method of these claims is not simply using user feedback to improve future performance; it is *computing* message ratings for an analysis of discussion community activity. Lang does not teach the step of *computing an opinion rating* for an electronic message. Accordingly, claims 16-25 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

C. Claims 39-51

These claims all depend from independent claim 33 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 33. As discussed above, claim 33 has been amended to provide that the relevance score is a numerical relevance score, and the numerical relevance score rates the relevance of the collected message to at least one topic on a numerical scale. As discussed with respect to claim 1, by requiring each message to be assigned a computed numerical score that ranks its relevance to a topic on a numerical scale, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple logical associations and tagging described in Knight. Similarly, claims 39, 41, 43, 44, and 51 have been amended to provide that the buzz, migration, influence, and reputation scores are all numerical scores.

Further, as noted above, the adaptive search method described in Lang uses *manual ratings of messages by users* to improve the quality of subsequent searches; it does not teach this feature of message ratings *computed* by the system upon analysis of each electronic message. Because this step of computing numerical relevance scores is not taught by either Knight or Lang, claims 39-51 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

Further regarding claim 50, the Office action acknowledges that neither Knight nor Lang teaches comparison of a computed buzz score to a predetermined threshold in order to identify unusual discussion patterns. The Office action contends that this step would nonetheless be obvious because it is well-known in the art to monitor electronic discussion forums to detect various situations, including illegal activity, swearing, and misuse of the system. (Office action, ¶ 28). Such monitoring, even if well-known in the art, does not teach the comparison of a computed buzz score with a predetermined threshold in order to identify unusual discussion patterns. The buzz score according to the present application, and the use of it as a comparative measure to detect unusual

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discussion patterns, is not taught or suggested by any of the cited references. The Office action has cited no reference that teaches this feature of claim 50.

D. Claims 76-90

These claims all depend from independent claim 72 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 72. As discussed above, claim 72 has been amended to provide expressly that the relevance score is a numerical relevance score. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, by requiring each message to be assigned a computed numerical score that ranks its relevance to a topic on a numerical scale, this claim clearly goes beyond the simple logical associations and tagging described in Knight. Similarly, claims 78, 80, 82, and 90 have been amended to provide that the buzz, migration, influence, and reputation scores are all numerical scores.

Further, as noted above, the adaptive search method described in Lang uses *manual ratings of messages by users* to improve the quality of subsequent searches; it does not teach this feature of message ratings *computed* by the system upon analysis of each electronic message. Because this step of computing numerical relevance scores is not taught by either Knight or Lang, claims 76-90 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

IV. Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-58 and 60-90, now pending as amended, are distinguishable from the references cited, and in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections of record is respectfully requested.

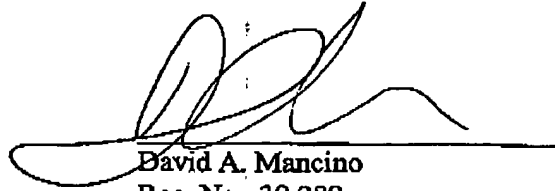
If the Examiner wishes to discuss any aspect of this response, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

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